

Message Text

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47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 OC-05 CCO-00 SY-05

OPR-02 SCCT-01 A-01 SCA-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05 /096 W

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O R 221345Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7804

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15461

.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: THREE MORE SHOOTING DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS

REF: BEIRUT 15412 (1154Z)

SUMMARY: AS LEBANON ENTERED THE FINAL DAYS BEFORE THE NORMALLY FESTIVE CHRISTMAS SEASON, TENSIONS REMAIN, CLASHES AND SNIPING ARE REPORTED IN VARIOUS LOCALITIES AND THERE ARE FEW OVERT SIGNS OF HOLIDAY CHEER. THE FEDAYEEN AND LEBANESE PROGRESSIVES HAVE PUBLISHED STATEMENT EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR RELATIVE CALM OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S (FBIS JN2120507), BUT LOCAL RUMOR MILL CONTINUES TO SPEW FORTH VIELED WARNINGS OF A NOISY YULE. WHISPER CAMPAIGN SUFFICIENT TO COW EVEN MOST INTREPID SHOPPER. END SUMMARY.

1. SYRIAN CHIEF OF STAFF SHEHABI DEPARTED BEIRUT DEC 21 AFTER WHIRLWIND ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS WHICH HE PRONOUNCED TO BE "POSITIVE." PRIMIN KARAME, WHO RECEIVED THE SUPPORT OF SHEHABI IN ALL LATTER'S MEETINGS HERE, DEPARTED BEIRUT MORNING DEC 22 FOR TRIP TO DAMASCUS, KEEPING MOMENTUM OF SYRIAN INITIATIVE ALIVE. ACCORDING TO SOME SPECULATION REACHING US, PRES FRANGIE TOOK SHEHABI TO TASK IN THEIR INITIAL ENCOUNTER FOR PALESTINIAN AND SYRIAN "INFILTRATION" INTO COUNTRY, PRODUCING THICK FILE OF REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS ON SUBJECT COMPILED BY ARMY G-2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LUCIEN DAHDAH, CLOSE CONFIDANTE OF FRANGIE, WHO TOOK OFF FOR SYRIA DEC 21, CARRIED EVEN MORE MASSIVE DOSSIER TO MAKE CERTAIN POINT WAS NOT MISSED BY SYRIAN PRES ASAD AND FONMIN KHADDAM. MEANWHILE, FRANGIE IS ALLEGEDLY HARD AT WORK ATTEMPTING TO HAVE HIMSELF INVITED TO SUMMIT MEETING IN DAMASCUS WHICH WOULD GROUP HIM WITH ASAD AND SAUDI KING KHALED, WHO WILL ARRIVE IN SYRIAN CAPITAL ON DEC 25. CALL IN CAIRO BY GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, ACTING BY HIS OWN ADMISSION, ON FRANGIE'S INSTRUCTIONS, FOR EGYPTIAN MEDIATION, ALMOST GUARANTEES FRANGIE A TEPID REACTION IN DAMASCUS. KARAME MET WITH FRANGIE, WITH WHOM HE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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ONCE MORE AT LOGGERHEADS, EARLY DEC 22 BEFORE TAKING A HELICOPTER TO DAMASCUS.

2. SECURITY SITUATION REMAINS QUITE SHAKY BUT HAS NOT THUS FAR RELAPSED INTO PREVIOUS FEROCITY IN BEIRUT. WE ARE WITNESSING RETURN BY SOME ARMED MEN INTO STREETS WHICH THEY CLEARED ONLY DAYS AGO. BEIRUT RADIO CONTINUES TO BROADCAST COMPENDIUM OF UNSAFE AREAS AND SNIPING AND HEAVIER

EXCHANGES CONTINUE TO OCCUR IN TROUBLE SPOTS, PARTICULARLY AFTER DARK. YESTERDAY'S INCIDENTS REPORTEDLY AFFECTED SOUK AREA AND CENTRAL NORTH-SOUTH AXIS ALONG BESHARA AL-KHOURY STREET AS WELL. RAS BEIRUT/COLLEGE PROTESTANT AREA WAS SCENE BEGINNING AT 0130 HOURS DEC 22 OF NOISY FIREFIGHT WHICH INVOLVED ARMY FORCES AT NEARBY MILITARY RADIO STATION SUPPORTED BY PALESTINIAN ARMED STRUGGLE COMMAND (PASC) AGAINST INTERLOPERS WHOM ONE SOURCE NAMED AS "DISSIDENT" MURABITOUN (CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES). THIS SHOOT-EM-UP WAS APPARENTLY MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF NIGHT IN BEIRUT, ALTHOUGH POT CONTINUES TO BUBBLE FURIOUSLY IN PROVINCES.

3. MAIN FLASHPOINT AT PRESENT MOMENT IS TOWN OF MANSOURIYAH (NEAR BEIT MERI) IN THE METN, WHERE GUNMEN OF THE PPS AND COMMUNIST PARTY APPARENTLY OCCUPIED CHURCH AND OTHER BUILDINGS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PHALANGE FIRE BRIGADE QUICKLY ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND ISSUED ULTIMATUM DEMANDING WITHDRAWAL OR ELSE FOR 1130 HOURS TODAY. ZAHLE ALSO WAS SITE OF HEAVY CLASHES AND EXCHANGES OF ARTILLERY FIRE DEC 21 WITH NEIGHBORING SAADNAYEL. LEBANESE ARMY WAS REPORTEDLY ACTIVE IN FIGHTING WHICH LEFT AT LEAST SIX DEAD IN ZAHLE. UPDATED REPORTS ON THE SITUATION THERE OR IN TRIPOLI WERE TOWNSMEN AND ZGHORTAWIS CONTINUE THEIR FEUD AND ASSASSINATION OF GOVERNOR (A SUPPORTER OF JUMBLATT) HAS LEFT BITTER AFTERTASTE, ARE NOT RPT NOT AVAILABLE. GOVERNOR KILLED IN MOSLEM AREA AND ALL INDICATIONS THEREFORE ARE THAT MURDERERS WERE LEFT-WING MOSLEMS.

4. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, NOT ONLY GOL AND SYRIA BUT "MODERATE" PALESTINIANS CONTINUE EFFORTS TO HOLD CUT-AND-PASTE CEASEFIRE TOGETHER. 'ARAFAT AND CO. ARE NOT ONLY WORRIED AS ALWAYS ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF BEING SUCKED HELTER-SKELTER INTO LEB-
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ANESE MAELSTROM, BUT ARE BEGINNING TO EYE NERVOUSLY APPROACHING UN DEBATE SET FOR JAN 12. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE REPORT, SHAFIQ AL HOUT, DIRECTOR OF PLO BEIRUT OFFICE, HAS RECENTLY BEEN COMPLAINING LOUDLY THAT PERSISTING INTERNECINE CONFLICT IN LEBANON UNDERMINES ARAB AND PLO PITCH ABOUT LOVE, BROTHER HOOD AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN "DEMOCRATIC, SECULAR STATE" OF PALESTINE.

5. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY REMAINS LIGHT, AND IN REPOSE TO INCIDENT IN RAS BEIRUT LAST NIGHT HAMRA SHOPKEEPERS ARE AGAIN REMOVING GOODS FROM STORES. OIL MINISTRY OFFICIALS ARE TRYING TO ARRANGE ARMED ESCORTS TO MAKE FUEL OIL DELIVERIES TO HOMES AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS NOW THAT REPAIR OF SUBMARINE LINE HAS ALLOWED THE DISCHARGE OF A TANKER LOAD OF HEATING FUEL AT DORA. BECAUSE DELIVERIES HAVE BEEN MADE

ONLY TO HOSPITALS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN RECENT DAYS,
MOST OTHER BUILDINGS WITHOUT HEAT AND HOT WATER. PORT IS
CLOSED AND LABOR LEADERS ANNOUNCED OVER WEEKEND THAT
WORKERS WOULD NOT RETURN TO THEIR JOBS UNTIL THE PORT'S
SECURITY IS ASSURED. AIRPORT OFFICIALS REPORT
UPSURGE IN AIR PASSENGER TRAFFIC AS PEOPLE LEAVE THE COUNTRY
FOR THE HOLIDAYS.
GODLEY

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